

Space of Peace Cooperation

# MISSION REPORT ANTIOQUIA

November 11th to 15th, 2018



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**Observation mission on the human rights and safety conditions  
of communities in the municipalities impacted by the  
Hidroituango Hydropower Project – Antioquia\***

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**Mundubat**





Crédito: Bea gil

# PRESENTATION

BETWEEN THE 11TH AND 15TH OF NOVEMBER, 2018, THE *ESPACIO DE COOPERACIÓN PARA LA PAZ* - ECP CARRIED OUT AN OBSERVATION MISSION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SAFETY CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITIES WORKING WITH THE RÍOS VIVOS (LIVING RIVERS) ANTIOQUIA MOVEMENT IN THE AREA INFLUENCED

by the Ituango Hydropower Project. Specifically, the mission observed risks to communities caused by the multiple impacts of the Hidroituango megaproject, in a region with major impacts from the armed conflict, in particular, economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts and impediments to the exercise of environment and territorial defense.

The organizations that participated in the mission were Broederlijk Denle, Forum from Women and Development – Fokus, Kolko – Menschenrechte für Kolumbien e.V., Oidhaco, Mundubat, the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation – SweFOR, and the technical secretariat of ECP, with technical support in the field from the Ríos Vivos Antioquia Movement (MRVA, for its acronym in Spanish). The mission

visited the municipalities of Sabanalarga, Toledo, Ituango and the township of Puerto Valdivia in Valdivia (Antioquia).

The MRVA<sup>1</sup> is a movement comprised of fifteen grassroots social organizations made up of women, youth, *barequeros* (artisanal gold miners), fisher men and women, muleteers, small-scale farmers, and others who identify themselves as impacted by the Hidroituango megaproject and desire to remain in their territory and defend it. Most of its members also identify as victims of the armed conflict.

During the mission, meetings were held with communities and organizations of victims and impacted youth, women, miners, fishermen and women, and *barequeros*

that are part of the Ríos Vivos Antioquia Movement. On an institutional level, there was a meeting with the Secretary of Government of Valdivia, in representation of the Municipal Mayor's Office. The Ituango Mayor's Office decided not to meet with the mission, and it was not possible to meet with the Toledo Mayor's Office.

To write this report, information was gathered from Early Alerts and Risk Reports produced by the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office of Antioquia. The Governor's Office of Antioquia, the Toledo Mayor's Office, and the Public Utilities Companies of Medellín (EPM) provided information in response to freedom of information requests sent by the *Espacio de Cooperación para la Paz*. The offices of the mayors in the municipalities of Sabanalarga and Ituango did not respond to these requests.

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1 <https://riosvivosantioquia.org/>

# CONTEXT

## 2.1 Regional characteristics

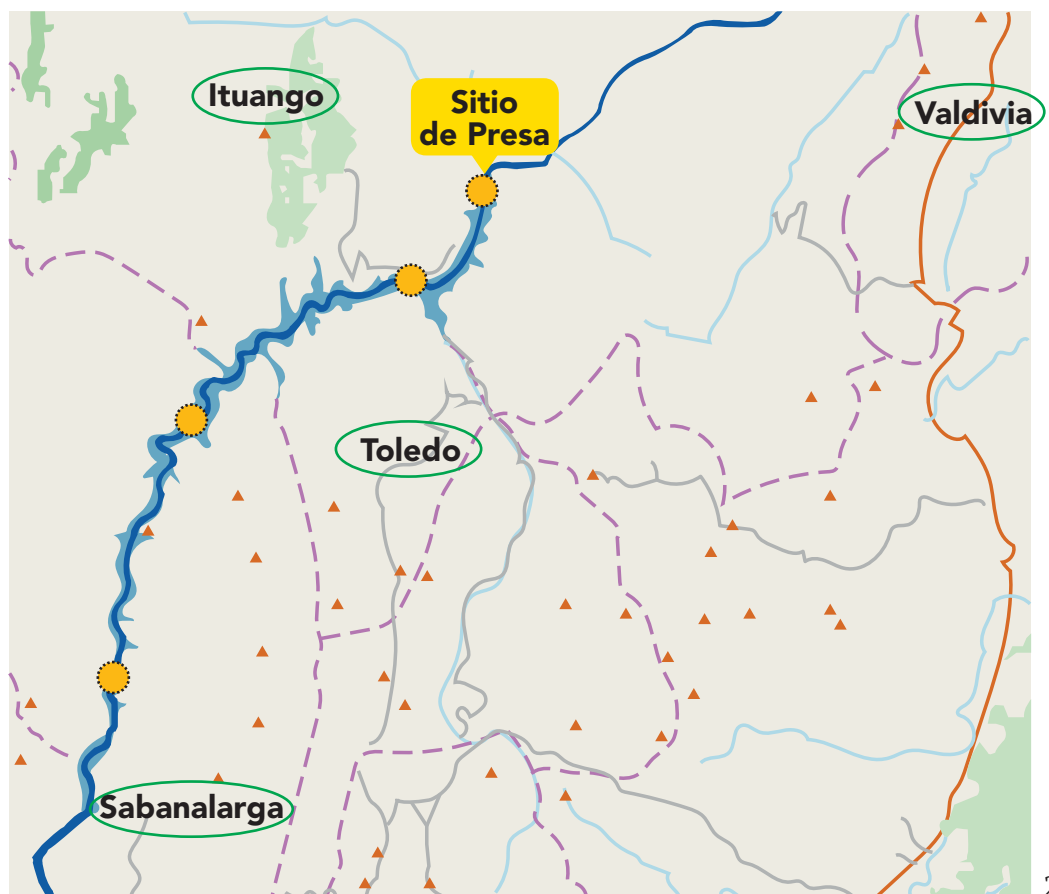
The municipalities of Sabanalarga, Toledo, Ituango, and Valdivia are located in the sub region of Norte de Antioquia, about 170 kilometers from Medellín, in what is called the Canyon of the Cauca River. Sabanalarga and Toledo are located upstream of the Hidroituango project, and Ituango and Valdivia, including the township of Puerto Valdivia, are downstream.

These municipalities have an eminently rural and scattered population, due to the region's mountainous geography, which also makes transportation between the

municipalities and townships difficult. These mobility challenges, as will be looked at in greater detail, have been directly aggravated by the Hidroituango and other projects, as they have changed the river's currents, which were key to water transportation routes, or due to the disappearance of land transportation routes as a result of the dam filling process. This has meant that the population must travel along EPM routes, in the case of Ituango.

The communities that live in the Canyon of the Cauca River have a specific cultural identity called "Cañonera" (Canyon People), which is characterized by a close relationship with the river and in





2

particular with *barequeo*<sup>3</sup> (an artisanal practice of manually washing gold from the river's sand) as their source of livelihood, but also with fishing and agriculture, among other activities.

## 2.2 The Ituango Hydropower Project - Hidroituango

Hidroituango aims to be the largest electricity generating project in Colombia. Construction began in 2010,<sup>4</sup> including a 225-meter tall dam and a 79 kilometer-long reservoir with a capacity of 20 million cubic meters. The project is located on the Cauca River, in what is known as the Canyon of

2 Observatorio de conflictos Ambientales - Universidad Nacional de Colombia. *Map of the Conflict: Hidroeléctrica Hidroituango - Hidroeléctrica Ituango S.A. E.S.P.- Ríos Vivos - Antioquia*. [https://conflictos-ambientales.net/oca\\_bd/env\\_problems/view/23](https://conflictos-ambientales.net/oca_bd/env_problems/view/23)

3 Aprobeh, Broederlijk Delen, Cajar, Cedib, and Cedhu (2018). *Abuse of authority against defenders of human rights, land, and the environment*.

4 After the Environmental License was granted by the Ministry of the Environment, Housing, and Territorial Development, by means of resolution 0155 of 30 January, 2009

Cauca, in northwestern Antioquia, about 170 km from Medellín.<sup>5</sup> It covers land in 12 municipalities, including Ituango, where the main infrastructure is located, and Valdivia, Sabanalarga, and Toledo.<sup>6</sup>

Initially, the power station, which is predicted to generate 2,400 MW (representing 17% of the country's electrical energy demand<sup>7</sup>), was supposed to begin operating at the end of 2018; however, after the emergency in April and May of 2018, to be described later in the document, operations will not commence until the second half of 2021.<sup>8</sup>

*Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM-Public Utility Companies of Medellín) is the executor of the project and one of the main stockholders in the Ituango Hydropower Project. Other notable stockholders are the Instituto para el Desarrollo de Antioquia (IDEA-Antioquia Institute for Development) and the Department of Antioquia.<sup>9</sup> In

this context, international capital is key for Hidroituango to begin operations. Some of the countries that have companies, banks or, insurers with investments or contracts in the project are<sup>10</sup>: Germany (KfW IPEX-Bank, Allianz, Muenchner Rueck, and Hannover Rueck); Brazil (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social do Brasil, Camargo Correa); Canada (Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec); China (Industrial and Commercial Bank of China); Spain (BBVA, Banco Santander, and Agroman Railroad Consortium); France (BNP Paribas); Japan (Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation); and Sweden (Atlas Copco and Scania); in addition to the Inter-American Development Bank.<sup>11</sup>

On 28 April, 2018, a landslide obstructed one of the dam's diversion tunnels, which caused an emergency in Hidroituango's area of influence.<sup>12</sup> The increased volume

5 Empresas Públicas de Medellín – EPM. *Hidroeléctrica Ituango*. [https://www.epm.com.co/site/portals/landing/ituango/Hidroelectrica\\_Ituango/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#1](https://www.epm.com.co/site/portals/landing/ituango/Hidroelectrica_Ituango/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#1)

6 EPM. *Ituango Hydropower Dam*.

7 Hidroeléctrica Ituango. Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Ituango. <https://www.hidroituango.com.co/proyectos/proyecto-hidroelectrico-ituango/38>

8 Villamizar, Eliana. (4 November, 2018). De manera segura y controlada comenzó a verter el embalse del proyecto hidroeléctrico Ituango. <https://www.hidroituango.com.co/articulo/de-manera-segura-y-controlada-comenzo-a-verter-el-embalse-del-proyecto-hidroelectrico-ituango/407>

9 Hidroeléctrica Ituango. About us. <https://www.hidroituango.com.co/hidroituango>

10 Information provided by member organizations of the Espacio de Cooperación para la Paz, the Ríos Vivos Antioquia Movement, and information available on Hidroituango: la tragedia que pudo ser peor. (5 December, 2018). *Semana*. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/hidroituango-la-tragedia-que-pudo-ser-peor/566970>

11 Cruz, David. (19 May, 2017). El BID financia Hidroituango ¿un proyecto en tela de juicio? *Semana Sostenible*. (<https://sostenibilidad.semana.com/opinion/articulo/banco-interamericano-de-desarrollo-e-hidroituango-un-proyecto-en-tela-de-juicio/37844>)

12 More information on the EPM emergency. (2018). Información oficial situación Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Ituango. <https://www.epm.com.co/site/home/sala-de-prensa/noticias-y-novedades/comunicado-proyecto-hidroelectrico-ituango/preguntas-y-repuestas-ituango#undefined>

of the river washed out “bridges, houses, and sources of livelihood for hundreds of families in the area.”<sup>13</sup> According to EPM, it declared a maximum alert due to a back-up of water in the upper part of the dam and variations in the river’s volume downstream (reductions and increases)<sup>14</sup> that, as was stated by the National Comptroller’s Office, “incurred partial damages on over 25,000 individuals in the 14 municipalities affected by the emergency [...] and incalculable damages to natural resources.”<sup>15</sup>

In relation to the emergency and the licensing and construction process for Hidroituango, a 2018 audit carried out by the Comptroller’s Office of the Republic<sup>16</sup> concluded that “the social and environmental damages produced by the Ituango Hydropower Project disaster are incalculable. And all result from serious errors committed in the issue and modification of an environmental license and repeated

non-compliance by the project’s owner.” This includes the fact that, according to the comptroller, “the municipal authorities, and even more so the inhabitants, do not have full information regarding the project’s risks and about when the uncertainty surrounding the situation will end.” Along those same lines, the report from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia *Hidroituango: ¿Qué pasó, por qué pasó, ¿qué está pasando y qué podría pasar?* (Hidroituango: What happened, why did it happen, what is happening and what could happen?),<sup>17</sup> contracted by the Governor’s Office of Antioquia, identifies eight construction errors in the dam and the risk of a dam collapse.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, in October 2018, after the Ríos Vivos Antioquia Movement filed on the Hidroituango case, the Latin American Water Tribunal<sup>19</sup> recognized “the severe environmental, social, economic, and cultural damages provoked by the Hidroituango project for the inhabitants of the area, as well as the population’s exposure to permanent risk” and recommended that authorities, among other provisions, “fulfill their con-

13 García-Torres, Miriam. (31 October, 2018). La banca y las empresas españolas, en el ecocidio del Río Cauca. *Ctxt*. <https://ctxt.es/es/20181031/Politica/22610/Hidroituango-ibex-35-ferroviario-santander-bbva-comunidades-indigenas-ecologismo-america-latina.htm>

14 EPM. (2018). Información oficial situación Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Ituango.

15 Contraloría General de la República. (27 August, 2018). Comunicado de prensa No. 132. [https://www.contraloria.gov.co/contraloria/sala-de-prensa/boletines-de-prensa/-/asset\\_publisher/9IOzepbPkrRW/content/epm-tomo-decisiones-sin-sustento-tecnico-durante-la-construccion-licenciamiento-ambiental-de-hidroituango-estuvo-plagado-de-errores-revela-auditoria-d](https://www.contraloria.gov.co/contraloria/sala-de-prensa/boletines-de-prensa/-/asset_publisher/9IOzepbPkrRW/content/epm-tomo-decisiones-sin-sustento-tecnico-durante-la-construccion-licenciamiento-ambiental-de-hidroituango-estuvo-plagado-de-errores-revela-auditoria-d)

16 Contraloría General de la República. (27 August, 2018). Comunicado de prensa No. 132.

17 Portilla, Modesto. (2018). *Hidroituango: ¿Qué pasó, por qué pasó, ¿qué está pasando y qué podría pasar?*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia. <https://riosvivosantioquia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Informe-Te%CC%81cnico-General.pdf>

18 At the date of writing this report, the results are not known from the international expert opinion contracted by EPM with the Chilean company Skava Consulting, by request of the National Environmental Licensing Authority.

19 The TLA is an alternative justice body that analyzes and seeks solutions to increasing water conflicts. See more at: <http://tragua.com/>

ventional, constitutional, and legal obligations to apply reparation, restitution, and satisfaction measures for the damages, including a dignified relocation of the displaced populations.”<sup>20</sup>

## 2.3 Defense of human rights and megaprojects

The United Nation’s Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights<sup>21</sup> of 2011, clarify, among other elements, that the State has the obligation to protect the people within its territory and/or jurisdiction from human rights violations committed by third parties, including companies. In turn, the companies have an independent responsibility to respect human rights, which includes responding to negative impacts derived from their activities.

In contexts such as the construction of megaprojects, a possible infringement on rights impinges not only on the affected communities but especially on defenders, as they play a key role in demanding respect for human rights. During the No-

vember 2018 visit to Colombia, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of defenders<sup>22</sup> stated that “there has been a dramatic increase in the number of killings, threats, and intimidation of human rights defenders in the country [...] [they] are operating in a coercive and unsafe environment.”

In particular, in relation to exercising the defense of environmental human rights, the UN Special Rapporteur stated in his report to the General Assembly in 2016 that “States have the essential responsibility to protect the rights to life and the physical and psychological integrity of all who live in their territory, including defenders of human rights, the land, and the environment.” In addition, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders establishes that “on the one hand, the State Parties must refrain from violating the rights of human rights defenders; on the other hand, they must act with due diligence to prevent and investigate human rights violations and bring the responsible parties to justice.”<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – IACHR published a re-

20 Tribunal Latinoamericano del Agua recomienda desmantelar Hidroituango. (31 October, 2018). *El Espectador*. [https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/tribunal-latinoamericano-del-agua-recomienda-desmantelar-hidroituango-articulo-821146?fbclid=IwAR2leVRmJdTbjOTXSFzOjO\\_oGlxIZg\\_YIE-I6uy26YGES\\_aN-qjLk8AFv3l8](https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/tribunal-latinoamericano-del-agua-recomienda-desmantelar-hidroituango-articulo-821146?fbclid=IwAR2leVRmJdTbjOTXSFzOjO_oGlxIZg_YIE-I6uy26YGES_aN-qjLk8AFv3l8)

21 United Nations (2011). *Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights*. [https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/GuidingprinciplesBusinessshr\\_eN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/GuidingprinciplesBusinessshr_eN.pdf)

22 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (3 December, 2018). Colombia must act to stop killings and attacks against human rights defenders – UN expert. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23968&LangID=E>

23 Aprobeh, Broederlijk Delen, Cajar, Cedib and Cedhu. (2018). *Abuse of authority against defenders of human rights, land, and the environment*

port in 2017 titled<sup>24</sup> “Toward a Comprehensive Policy to Protect Human Rights Defenders” which makes recommendations to States and emphasizes the special risk faced by defenders of the environment, land, and those who oppose megaprojects. The specific and increased risks that the IACHR refer to, which have a differentiated impact on women defenders, have a direct relationship to the attempt to annihilate the exercise of the defense of the right to land and the environment. Included in rights infringements within this context they emphasize:<sup>25</sup> criminal persecution and criminalization; illegal and massive detentions, sexual violence against women; violent evictions without guarantees; threats, surveillance, and aggressions; violations of the right to protest and freedom of expression; restriction of free mobility; enforced disappearance and massacres, among others.

In Colombia, the 2005 National Action Plan on Human Rights and Companies<sup>26</sup> estab-

lishes three central pillars: 1) States have the obligation to protect human rights from possible impacts from third parties, including companies. 2) Companies have the responsibility to respect human rights. 3) It is necessary to act in a proactive manner regarding the risks and adverse impacts on human rights that individuals suffer due to companies’ activities in order to prevent, mitigate, and remedy these impacts.

Finally, in this framework, it is necessary to mention that, due to the high-risk situation for members of the MRVA, which is particularly complex due to the scattering and isolation of its members throughout the territory and their work in the defense of the territory and environment, MRVA presented a **Prevention and Collective Protection Plan** in 2017, developed with support from the Colombian Ministry of the Interior and SweFOR.

24 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2017). *Políticas integrales de protección de personas defensoras*. <http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/informes/pdfs/proteccion-personas-defensoras.pdf>

25 Urgent Action Fund for Latin America. (2016). *Extractivism in Latin America: Impact on women’s lives and proposals for the defense of territory*. [https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/site/assets/files/1175/b81245\\_6cc6d3d7edd-447d0ab461860aelae64f.pdf](https://fondoaccionurgente.org.co/site/assets/files/1175/b81245_6cc6d3d7edd-447d0ab461860aelae64f.pdf)

26 Presidencia de la República. (2016). *Colombia Avanza. Derechos Humanos y Empresas Plan Nacional de Acción de Derechos Humanos y Empresas*. <http://www.derechoshumanos.gov.co/observatorio/publicaciones/Documentos/2017/170213-PNA-web.pdf>

# FINDINGS

During its meetings and dialogue with men and women from the communities and institutions in the region, the mission identified several findings<sup>27</sup> in relation to implicit risks to the community and organizational initiatives connected to Ríos Vivos Antioquia Movement, for example: the implementation of a megaproject has had a direct impact on their revictimization, particularly as a population that by and large is victim of and impacted by the Colombian internal armed conflict; there are also risks related to the enjoyment and guarantee their Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ES-

CER); and in relation to their safety and protection as human rights defenders.

## 3.1 Impact of the armed conflict

The Ituango Hydropower Project's area of influence is a region that has been hard hit by the armed conflict over the last decades. An estimated 60% of the population is a victim.<sup>28</sup> The communities face a high level of revictimization because of the risks and their condition as conflict victims is compounded by the megaproject's social, economic, and environmental impacts and the risk of disaster. For example, during the mission

<sup>27</sup> It is important to note the difference between the concepts of "affected" by the project and "victims" of the emergency, which are mentioned throughout the report. "Affected" refers to the population that sees itself directly impacted by the megaproject's construction and the initiation of operations; "Victims" are those who were impacted by the emergency.

<sup>28</sup> García-Torres, Miriam. (31 October, 2018). La banca y las empresas españolas, en el ecocidio del Río Cauca. *Ctxt*.

in Puerto Valdivia, the leaders stated that the emergency, “revictimizes us because we were forced to displace and to leave our territory.”

A key element in the presence and operation of illegal armed actors in the region is that, as indicated in Risk Report N° 037-17<sup>29</sup> of the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office, the difficult terrain has led “to it being a region used for the illegal extraction of timber and for planting illicit use crops like coca leaf,” which is why [armed groups] look to control the cocaine production and commercialization chains using armed intimidation.

In addition, in the context of the Colombian armed conflict there are links between the presence of illegal armed actors and forced displacement, dispossession, or forced abandonment, which has resulted in a “concentration of property and diverse economic groups taking advantage of the victim population’s vulnerable conditions to acquire land.”<sup>30</sup> According to the *Comisión Colombiana de Juristas*, in 2017, “the dispute for natural resources and control of the land and territory are some of the root causes of the war [... which has] directly impacted the

distribution and concentration of land in Colombia,” causing poverty and a lack of opportunities that, in turn, is connected to the creation or continuity of illegal armed groups.

**“We were victims of the violence years ago and now we are being revictimized by this project,” leader in Toledo.**

The *Observatorio de Memoria y Conflicto* (Observatory on Memory and Conflict) of the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* – CNMH (National Center for Historical Memory) documented 2,345 individuals who were direct victims of enforced disappearance in the 17 municipalities that surround the Cauca River in Antioquia (between 1958 and 2018),<sup>31</sup> which means that “one in every one hundred individuals forcibly disappeared in Colombia were in the municipalities affected by Hidroituango.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, according to a woman leader in Ituango, “we are being revictimized because by filling the reservoir we will not be able to recover the bodies of those who were disappeared.”

29 Defensoría del Pueblo. (14 August, 2017). Informe de Riesgo N° 037-17

30 Comisión Colombiana de Juristas. (2017). *Restitución de tierras y empresas. Oportunidades y desafíos*. [http://www.coljuristas.org/documentos/tmp/b-restitucion\\_de\\_tierras\\_y\\_empresas-oportunidades\\_y\\_desafios.pdf](http://www.coljuristas.org/documentos/tmp/b-restitucion_de_tierras_y_empresas-oportunidades_y_desafios.pdf)

31 Toro, Juan José. (20 November, 2018). La lucha de los cañoneros por sacar la verdad del río Cauca. *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*. <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/noticias/noticias-cmh/la-lucha-de-los-cañoneros-por-sacar-la-verdad-del-rio-cauca>

32 Human Rights Everywhere. (2018). *Hidroituango: Desaparecer a los desaparecidos*. <https://hrev.org/blog/hidroituango-desaparecer-a-los-desaparecidos/>

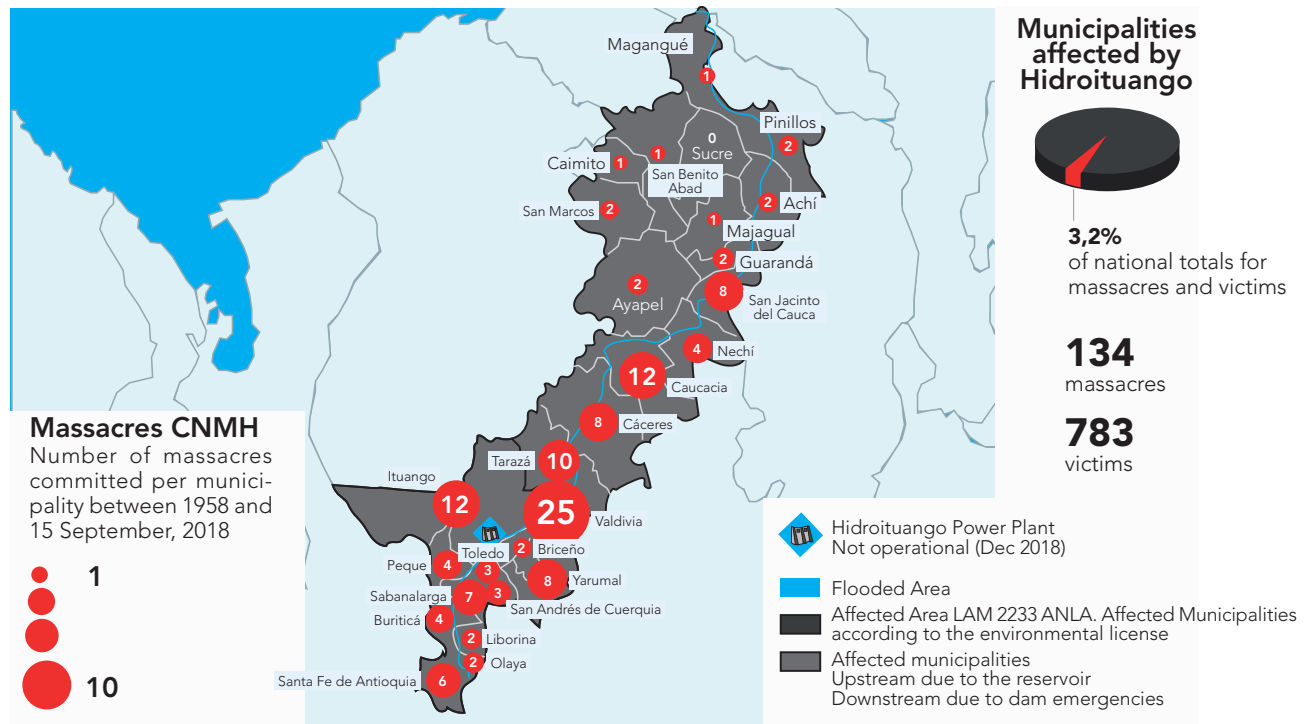


According to MRVA with data from the CNMH, up to 15 September, 2018 there were 134 massacres in the municipalities influenced by the Hidroituango

project, “in addition to the relentless selective killings which have created fear and unrest among the canyon’s inhabitants for decades.”<sup>33</sup>

## MUNICIPALITIES AFFECTED BY HIDROITUANGO

### Massacres – CNMH data (up to 15 September, 2018)



**Massacre:** This is a common concept in Colombia, but it was not defined in Law 589 of 2000. The cartographic data is a representation of homicides in which over 3 individuals were killed, under circumstances such as those described by the CNMH and M.V. Uribe

**4,211** massacres were documented in Colombia between 1958 and 15 September, 2018. A total of **24,447** individuals were killed (OMC- CNMH).



Massacres CNMH. Number of massacres committed per municipality between 1958 and 15 September, 2018

Sources: Information: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH) – Database, Observatorio de Memoria y Conflicto (OMC) 2018, LAM 2233 ANLA 2017, EPM, UNGRD, PMU, G. Vargas, 2018. Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia (MRVA) 2017-2018, Icons: Iconoclasistas, Cartographic base: DANE, IDEAM, ESRI, USGS, NOAA

33 Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia. Bredunco. <https://riosvivosantioquia.org/quienes-somos/bredunco/>



Since 2010, the communities have publicly stated that upstream from the dam, in Sabanalarga, there are “graves and bodies buried along the river’s shore,” due to enforced disappearances and massacres over the last decades. In Ituango, the population has also stated that victims are buried under the dam’s reservoir and that the process of filling it makes difficult or impossible the exhumation of corpses, their identification, and return to their families. Filling the reservoir and the resulting impossibility to access truth, justice, and reparation for enforced disappearances, “would create a significant detriment to the victims’ rights.”<sup>34</sup>

**“We are victims of the armed conflict and want our rights to truth and justice,” woman leader in Ituango**

The communities also indicated that they currently see an increase in the presence of armed actors in their territory since the signing of the peace agreement and the subsequent laying down of arms by the FARC-EP. This has meant an increase of risks to those who defend human rights, the land, and the environment. In Ituango they stated that for years now “those who were in

opposition were disappeared and recently there have been deaths,” which is why the communities themselves are warning of the increased risk to their work as defenders.

Imminent Early Alert N° 029-18<sup>35</sup> of the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office warned of the “current and grave situation of risk in the municipality of Ituango,” due to the presence of the Gaitanista Self-defense Forces of Colombia – AGC, a confrontation between the AGC and a dissident group known as “los Caparrapos,” the creation of alleged dissident groups from the 36th Front of the FARC-EP, and the National Liberation Army – ELN’s expansion process towards Ituango. The alert affirms that “the population has perceived that the municipality of Ituango is once again facing a very similar situation to that which it suffered in the 90s and at the beginning of the 21st century, an era when grave human rights violations took place, characterized by the ruthlessness and tortures of that time, generally in homicide cases.” This is a situation that signifies a high risk for those who have a leadership role and are visible. This is why they “could be victims of attacks against their integrity and freedom, with the aim of controlling the population.”

**“The river was a refuge from the war for us. Nevertheless, we resisted,” leader in Ituango**

34 Oidhaco. (27 April, 2018). Proteger al Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia y los derechos de las víctimas del área de Hidroituango es una necesidad urgente. <http://www.oidhaco.org/?art=2276&lang=es&title=Proteger%20al%20Movimiento%20R%EDos%20Vivos%20Antioquia%20y%20los%20derechos%20de%20la%20v%EDctimas%20del%20Elrea%20de%20Hidroituango%20es%20una%20necesidad%20urgente>.

35 Defensoría del Pueblo. (9 March, 2018). Alerta Temprana de Inminencia N° 029-18

### 3.2 Infringements on economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights – ESCER

Among the risk scenarios contemplated in the MRVA's Prevention and Protection Plan, notable weight is given to ESCER violations, such as “the loss of and impacts on sources of livelihood for communities affected by Hidroituango that reduce the [population's] capacity to respond to the risks.” The river's fish shortage or the impossibility to continue artisanal gold mining has made it difficult to access even the minimum amount for subsistence, which “has obligated different members of the Movement to look for other sources of livelihood” or “move to other municipalities and cities.”<sup>36</sup>

#### “We need the river,” leader in Ituango

The mission identified the relevance of the “canyon” identity among the communities connected to MRVA, a culture not officially recognized in Antioquia and Colombia, which is characterized by living fundamentally off of the Cauca River. “They live - lived- fundamentally off the Cauca [River] where they extracted gold using a shovel and pan, and the fish ensured protein in their diet. They were able to get fruit, firewood, medicinal and edible plants, and occasionally wild ani-

mals from the forests along the river. With the gold they were able to buy all the food they did not produce.”<sup>37</sup> Many told the mission that the river was “the best boss” they had ever had, emphasizing that they set up camp on its beaches, fished or panned for gold when they wanted or needed to, “without asking anybody for permission.”

**“There is an economic crisis, because the barequeo and traditional fishing that sustained many families is no longer an option,” woman leader from Sabanalarga**

Upstream, rising river levels after the damming have also had an impact, erasing sources of livelihood and subsistence. In Sabanalarga, the community mainly lived off of *barequeo* and agriculture, coffee in particular as well as beans and corn. During conversations with the mission they declared that “at the moment coffee is not maturing” due to the environmental impacts caused by increased river volume due to the dam. This has changed the temperatures and has been a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, including methane.<sup>38</sup> “We have lost life,” stated a woman leader in Sabanalarga.

<sup>36</sup> Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia. (2017). Plan de prevención y protección del Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia. <https://riosvivosantioquia.org/documentos/>

<sup>37</sup> Castillo, Neyla. (2018). ¿Quiénes son los Cañoneros desplazados por Hidroituango?. <https://riosvivosantioquia.org/afianzamiento-cultural/quienes-son-los-canoneros-desplazados-por-hidroituango/>

<sup>38</sup> Ortúzar F., Puentes, A., Muriel, V. y Ribeiro, M. (2018). *Detrás de las represas: Inversiones del BNDES en Belo Monte e Hidroituango*. <https://aida-americas.org/es/detras-de-las-represas-inversiones-del-bndes-en-belo-monte-e-hidroituango>

The canyon's inhabitants also subsisted by harvesting the fruit that grows in the areas surrounding the Cauca River. However, they stated that the canyon's inhabitants are currently prohibited from free passage<sup>39</sup> in areas near the river, which increases their vulnerability by limiting their means of subsistence. On this matter, a leader in Toledo said that, "the river is like the feet of each inhabitant, it cannot be privatized."

**Leader in Ituango: "The EPM census did not include all of the affected individuals"**

In the face of having lost their sources of livelihood and subsistence, the communities are asking for alternative proposals from the Mayor's offices and EPM. The local government in Valdivia stated that different sectors have reported challenges in accessing alternative means of subsistence but, at the moment, even though fomenting productive projects for the community is a priority, there hasn't been progress. In Toledo the Mayor's office reported that the projects are contemplated in the local development plan and that emergency victims have been referred to the competent authorities to "replace the food, tools, and equipment that was lost," among other goods. In re-

gard to this, EPM's Environmental Management Plan takes into account a social management plan based on economic aspects, "in reference to the individuals and their communities, their economic or subsistence activities, the social and cultural relationships, and historic and cultural heritage, among others"<sup>40</sup> with the aim "to prevent, mitigate, correct, or compensate the impacts generated for the population during the project's construction phase" and "to restore the population's living conditions that were impacted by the project, through participatory processes and decisions reached between EPM and the community." According to the company and by means of example, as of the date of the writing of this report, "houses and economic activities [have been restored] for 279 families with property impacts."

The communities also expressed their concern about the 2009 impact census carried out by EPM<sup>41</sup> within the context of the process to have the environmental license granted by the Ministry of the Environment, Housing, and Territorial Development. According to the commu-

39 On 29 January, 2019, EPM, responded to the freedom of information request, reporting that, "within the framework of the Environmental License, they have acquired the necessary lots for the dam, clearing, and protection areas, lots which are private property [...], and have restricted access and passage for third parties."

40 EPM. *Ituango Hydropower Dam*.

41 EPM reported that, in the 2008 census, 1,432 affected individuals were identified, only taking into account miners without property impacts, gold buyers, and waterway transporters. In 2009 the census was updated after demonstrating "a possible impact on other economic activities [...] in areas surrounding [the river, such as] the extraction of sand and river materials," adding a total of 114 additional people.

nity in Ituango, they “did not include all the individuals affected by the project,”<sup>42</sup> in addition to other census deficiencies identified in the Comptroller Office’s audit.<sup>43</sup> These deficiencies would exclude part of the population from compensation or reparation measures.

**Female MRVA leader: “The impact is not only economic, but also social and environmental”**

In addition to the economic impact, there are social and cultural impacts. “It is no longer a river, it is a pool,” they said in Sabanalarga, which is why, they added, barequeo and traditional fishing, the ancestral knowledge of the “canyon people,” the traditions of the ferry operators, the

exchange or trading of medicinal plants and herbs that grew along the river’s edge, are all directly affected by the dam’s construction. Also, the communities identified an increase in social divisions and a lack of trust among the population, elements that are also caused by the presence of illegal armed actors in the territories and human rights violations from the armed conflict that hit the region so hard.

The region’s geographic landscape makes mobility difficult between municipalities and townships, when before it was possible to use the river’s currents to travel, directly increasing the communities’ vulnerability. In addition, by means of example, the Pescadero Bridge, which joined Ituango with other municipalities, disappeared due to the filling of the dam. According to statements from a leader in Ituango, this limits the community’s free mobility. To access Ituango it is currently necessary to travel through the dam, either by tunnels and the wall or by boat. “[B]oth routes are controlled by EPM, which makes us more vulnerable because it is easier for leaders who oppose the project to be identified and because a closing of the route makes it impossible for somebody who is threatened to be urgently evacuated from the region, for example.”

Construction of the Hidroituango project has also impacted the environment. In addition to problems with coffee plant maturation, the communities visited identified tree felling in the dry forest and noise from the construction as actions that once again

42 According to the ODHACO press release, “Joint Statement to European Authorities about the Situation of MRVA and the areas around Hidroituango” (22 May, 2018), the census carried out by EPM to gather data on the affected population did not take into account all of the beach areas where gold panning will disappear and, in addition, “only aims to partially compensate barequeo activity, but does not take into account that the population in the area also works as fishermen and women, farmers, and [day] laborers and that, as is the case with barequeo, it will no longer be possible to do this work.” <http://www.oidhaco.org/?art=2289&title=COMUNICADO+P%DABLI-CO%3A++por+la+situaci%F3n+que+vive+la+poplaci%F3n+afectada+por+el+proyecto+de+Hidroituango+en+Colombia+y+el+Movimiento+R%E-Dos+Vivos+Antioquia.&lang=en>

43 Contraloría General de la Nación. (2018). *Informe auditoría de cumplimiento. Gestión de las autoridades ambientales en el proceso de licenciamiento – Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Ituango*. <https://www.contraloria.gov.co/documents/20181/1134239/Informe+Auditoria+ITUANGO.pdf/239ac985-f378-4eda-8cbc-e3129d87a66c?version=1.1>

limit their sources of livelihood. For example, there has been a reduction in the number of bees in their hives and species that previously were not present in the region have appeared such as snakes, which limits the community's mobility and work in the field, among others.

**Leader in Ituango: “There are no guarantees to be in our territory with our own sources of livelihood”**

The consulted population remembers numerous evictions “to remove the communities from the beach areas, which began in approximately 2010.” According to Oidhaco,<sup>44</sup> there have been 10 forced evictions in Hidroituango's area of influence, “which have meant the loss of their ways of life and economic activities of more than 500 families in the area. These families traditionally work in *barequeo* [...] and fishing along the banks of the Cauca River.”

### 3.3 Emergency response

After the emergency that began on 28 April, 2018, a department-wide disaster was declared by the Governor of Antioquia.<sup>45</sup> The communities were revictimized when their

vulnerability was exacerbated; for those who live on the river banks, according to information from the communities, the flooding washed away their homes, goods, food, and in particular their work tools, such as shovels, hoes, etc., which is why they had to be relocated by the local government to temporary shelters located in the county seats.

The MRVA maintains that the families, communities, and members “do not trust the institutions and that there is no clarity on the response to the emergencies for a safe relocation” and they believe that the State's risk management is not suitable for conflict zones. This is why several of them continue in the shelters, waiting for “a safe return to their homes.” The communities stated that this lack of trust arises, among other factors, from the fact that “when the evacuation began, we had already lost our sources of livelihood, in spite of the fast and effective response from the national army. They housed us in the county seat, but without significant guarantees,” according to a woman leader in Sabanalarga.

**Woman leader from MRVA: “The risks of the disaster are compounded by the risks of the armed conflict”**

At the beginning of the emergency, with the obstruction of one of the dam's diversions tunnels, the river's volume unexpectedly increased upstream. In Toledo and Sabanalarga, those who lived or worked near the river were “forced to run again, to have to start over,” according to a leader

<sup>44</sup> Oidhaco (22 May, 2018). Press release: “The International Community must call for the protection of the Living Rivers Movement in the Antioquia Department...”

<sup>45</sup> By means of Decree D 2018070001272 of 14 May, 2018, available at: <http://www.teleantioquia.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DECRETO-DE-CALAMIDAD-PUBLICA-HIDROITUANGO.pdf>

in Sabanalarga, who also said that, after the unexpected rise in river level, several families who lived near the river lost their homes and their sources of livelihood.

After the debris was cleared, river levels rose downstream on 12 May. The Cauca River's volume increased significantly causing alarm in 16 municipalities. The township of Puerto Valdivia was most affected<sup>46</sup> and after the emergency it "was left totally empty," according to a leader from the area.

**Woman leader in Sabanalarga: "Timely support was not given to us"**

During the mission, it was possible to visit the communities that are still in shelters in Sabanalarga and Ituango. They, like in the other municipalities, stated that "there is not a unified victims' census," which limits their possibilities to access aid. This was affirmed by a woman leader in Sabanalarga, who added that, in that municipality, "we had been at the EPM offices and in the plaza for six months." The community stated that "we did not have any options, that is why we occupied the EPM office as a shelter." In Ituango, the Mayor's Office put the victims in the Coliseum after the emergency. Currently there are 37 individuals who are still living there, all of whom are MRVA members.

In both cases, proceedings are currently underway to issue orders to evict the communities from both shelters. These proceedings were initiated "by means of police complaints by the government in Ituango and EPM in Sabanalarga," according to a woman MRVA leader.

**Leader in Puerto Valdivia: "Imminent risk and the community cannot live in harmony"**

The lack of trust in the local and departmental governments and EPM's actions was recurrent among the communities visited. However, as of the date of the writing of this report, several families have returned or are in the process of returning to the areas affected by the emergency. According to comments made by a leader in the township, many inhabitants "from Puerto Valdivia [still] do not feel that they have guarantees to return." In particular, they referred to the fact that the public institutions and EPM did not provide precise, timely, and adequate information prior to the emergency when there were already "several individuals who saw that something was happening to the river."

Puerto Valdivia has a particular situation since it has the largest number of victims counted by the census and recognized by EPM. In response to this "anthropogenic event," as they define it, at the time Valdivia's local government set up nine shelters for 7,466 individuals from 2,544 families. Even the local Mayor's office recognized that the municipality was not prepared to manage

<sup>46</sup> In total, EPM counted 252 families that were victim (235 in Puerto Valdivia and 17 in Briceño). The Governor's Office of Antioquia, in turn, reported a total of 17,039 individuals evacuated (in Puerto Valdivia, Tarazá, and Cáceres) and a total of 3,725 individuals in shelters/self-sheltered due to the emergency, in those municipalities.



an emergency of that magnitude or to implement a cross-cutting gender public policy for that situation. It stated that it is looking for ways to guarantee the community's safe return; psycho-social support is offered to the victims, and solutions are being sought to guarantee the right to education in the county seat and the right to healthcare through mobile brigades and attention. In addition, EPM offers economic support to the families that cannot return to their homes.

In addition, daily executive report N° 232 of the Hidroituango project<sup>47</sup> (28 December, 2018) reflects the main actions carried out by EPM and the government after the emergency and their results, emphasizing the provision of 84,344 emergency humanitarian aid kits, the payment of over 12,000 economic contributions, and the installation of 38 shelters, among others.

### 3.4 Risk context for MRVA members and their families

In Risk Report N° 010-17 of 30 March, 2017, the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office identified MRVA as an at-risk organization within the context of its activities in the defense of human rights in Antioquia. Also, several of the municipalities where the organization has a presence were indicated

as focal points of insecurity for defenders. This was reiterated in Early Alert N° 026-18, issued by the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office on 28 February, 2018.<sup>48</sup>

**Woman leader in Ituango “We are very afraid, very threatened. We are demanding our right to be on our lands, but without being killed for it”**

The MRVA said that, between 1 January, 2018 and 10 December of that same year, the communities opposed to the Hidroituango project have suffered a total of 108 attacks, which include assassinations, threats, forced evictions, stigmatization, and accusations, among others; this shows the complexities and difficulties in implementing the Prevention and Protection Plan for the MRVA,<sup>49</sup> which includes measures that are in line with decrees issued by the Minister of the Interior: Decree N° 2078 of 7 December, 2017,<sup>50</sup> and Decree N° 2252 of 29 December, 2017.<sup>51</sup>

48 Defensoría del Pueblo. (28 February, 2018). Alerta Temprana N° 026-18. <http://www.indepaz.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AT-N%C2%B0-026-18-Defensores.pdf>

49 Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia. (2017). Plan de prevención y protección del Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia.

50 “... regarding the collective protection plan for the rights to life, freedom, integrity, and personal safety of groups and communities”

51 “... regarding the work of governors and mayors as representatives of the President of the Republic in relation to the individual and collective protection of leaders of organizations, social and community-based movements, and at-risk human rights defenders.”

47 Written with information from EPM, the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management – UN-GRD, and the Administrative Department for Disaster Prevention and Response – DAPARD.



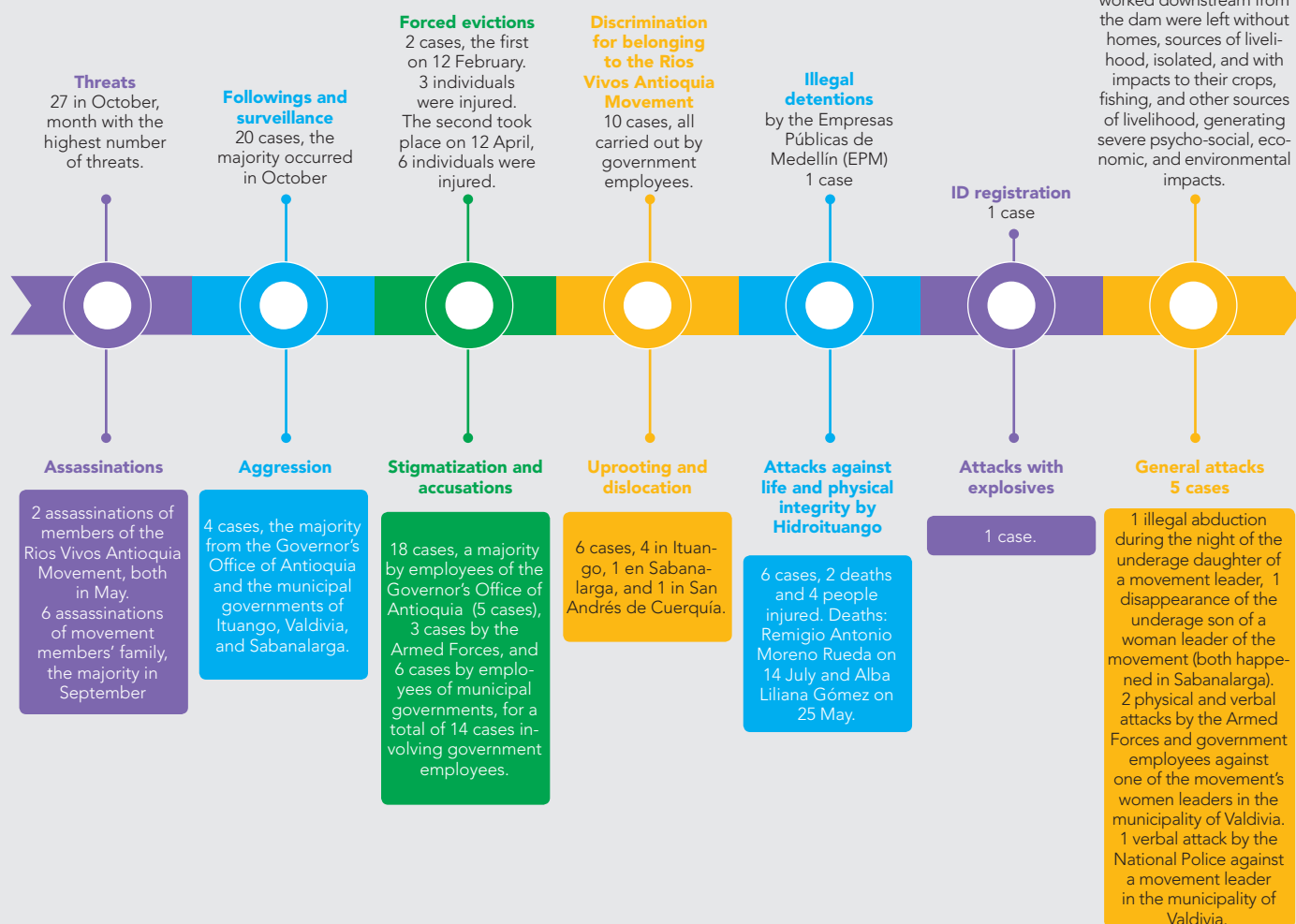
## 2018 year of the illegal damming, year of the tragedy generated by Hidroituango, and the highest number of attacks against Hidroituango opponents organized in the Rios Vivos Antioquia Movement

**108** attacks against communities affected by Hidroituango and opponents of Colombia's largest hydro power project, between January and 10 December, 2018

### Displacement for "development"

2 cases, the first due to the illegal damming of the Cauca River. 306 individuals who were upstream and along the riverbanks at the time of the flooding lost their sources of livelihood, tools, and in some cases, their homes. The majority were rescued by rescue units but, to date, they have not received any kind of attention.

The second case was due to a sudden increase in water levels downstream from the dam, generated by Hidroituango. 343 individuals who lived and worked downstream from the dam were left without homes, sources of livelihood, isolated, and with impacts to their crops, fishing, and other sources of livelihood, generating severe psycho-social, economic, and environmental impacts.





### **Leader in Sabanalarga: “We knew this dam would bring more violence to our municipalities, and that is what happened”**

In the last few months, as was expressed by the organization *Front Line Defenders*,<sup>52</sup> concerning patterns have been identified regarding attacks, killings, threats, persecution, and stigmatization against members of the Ríos Vivos Antioquia Movement and their families.

The communities that are part of MRVA, in particular Ituango and Valdivia, say they have suffered threats that on at least six occasions in 2018 have resulted in displacement or uprooting. This also led to at least 10 individuals leaving the MRVA due to the threats.

### **Leader in Ituango: “Talking signifies a major threat for us”**

They highlighted the threats suffered by several leaders in the two weeks leading up to the mission, in addition to what happened on 26 October, 2018 when the MRVA was declared a “military objective” by the Gaitanistas Self-defense Forces of Colombia – AGC, in addition to threats against two of the MRVA’s founding leaders in the municipality of Ituango. The threats were delivered by an

unknown man who provided the message, “people who do not get involved with the dam, will not have problems” and insisted that its members leave the organization. In addition, he declared that they knew about “Isabel Cristina Zuleta’s [leader and founder of MRVA] security measures, but that it wouldn’t do her any good, because they had hired experts who would take care of her if she returned to Ituango.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Woman leader from the MRVA: “The attacks correspond to moments of political action by MRVA”**

The leaders say that “the threats increased after the emergency and several social protest actions,” and that in general it has been identified that “the project’s rhythm sets the [level of] risks for its opponents,” with more aggression occurring during important moments for Hidroituango. These threats materialized, for example, with the killing of two MRVA members in May 2018<sup>54</sup> and

52 Front Line Defenders. (26 September, 2018). Killing of Family Members of Leaders of the Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia amidst Series of Attacks and Violence Against the Movement. <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/killing-family-members-leaders-movimiento-rios-vivos-antioquia-amidst-series-attacks-and>

53 Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia. (26 October, 2018). Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia recibe amenaza colectiva e individual hacia sus líderes fundadores. <https://riosvivosantioquia.org/movimiento-rios-vivos-antioquia-recibe-amenaza-colectiva-e-individual-hacia-sus-lideres-fundadores/>

54 Hugo Albeiro George Pérez was assassinated on 2 May, 2018 and Luis Alberto Torres Montoya was assassinated on 8 May, 2018. See more at Amnesty International. (11 May, 2018). Colombia: Authorities must investigate killings of community leaders and take urgent actions to protect human rights defenders. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/05/colombia-authorities-must-investigate-killings-of-community-leaders-and-take-urgent-action-to-protect-human-rights-defenders/>

the assassination of six family members, the majority in September 2018.

“We have relived discrimination, threats, and accusations from the government,” stated a leader in Ituango. In the four municipalities, the leaders who are part of MRVA stressed that public accusations and stigmatization exist, sometimes from government employees, against human rights defenders who exercise their right to freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and to protest. They also highlighted that the rejection, stigmatization, and accusations can lead to an increase in the attacks and violence against these leaders,<sup>55</sup> with women leaders and human rights defenders facing the greatest challenges in this context, because in addition to the stigmatization of their work, there “is the misogynist attitude from the local government employees” (as was stated in Ituango).

Thus, the situation of risk and vulnerability for MRVA member and their families who defend the territory and environment exemplifies the impact generated by the construction of a megaproject in a region that is characterized by major impacts from the armed conflict, a weak institutional response, and the

consequent violation of the population’s economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights.

### Update – 22 January, 2019

On 10 January, 2019 the public was informed that a sinkhole, created by an unidentified cause, had been discovered approximately 20 meters below the dam’s diversion tunnels, which forced an accelerated closure of the turbine chamber. For that reason, a Unified Command Post was created to monitor the risk, in addition to alerting the communities downstream from the dam. On 16 January, 2019 the turbine chamber’s first floodgate was closed.<sup>56</sup>

In regard to this situation, MRVA expressed its concern about the lack of information from EPM, the large number of fish that died, and the water shortages faced by the population in several municipalities, due to a reduction in the volume of the Cauca River after the floodgate was closed.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> In addition, these actions could be contrary to Directive 002 of 14 June, 2017 of the National Inspector General’s Office that indicates that “*public employees must abstain from behaviors that delegitimize, disqualify, harass or incite the harassment or stigmatization of (defenders) work.*”

<sup>56</sup> Villamizar, Eliana. (16 January, 2019). EPM logró el cierre de la primera compuerta de captación del proyecto hidroeléctrico Ituango. <https://www.hidroituango.com.co/articulo/epm-logro-el-cierre-de-la-primera-compuerta-de-captacion-del-proyecto-hidroelectrico-ituango/422>

<sup>57</sup> Contagio Radio. (21 January, 2019). Sequía y mortandad de peces alcanzan niveles críticos por operación de Hidroituango. <http://www.contagioradio.com/sequia-mortandad-peces-alcanzan-niveles-criticos-operacion-hidroituango-articulo-60189/>

## Recommendations to the international community:

### Observe the Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights

1. Generate a space for dialogue between MRVA, EPM, and the Colombian State, where the international community acts as a mediator and guarantor, with the objective of jointly seeking and generating solutions to the different problems in the region resulting from the implementation of the Hidroituango megaproject.
2. Demand that international investors, including the Inter-American Development Bank, commit to respecting human rights and refrain from negative impacts for the local populations where they have or are establishing their economic projects, in accordance with the Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights.
3. A moratorium on the payment of existing loans and desist from signing new loans from international investors, including the Inter-American Development Bank, until EPM offers a solution that is agreed upon with the communities affected by the Hidroituango megaproject.
4. Call on the national and international corporations and entities, as well as national authorities to provide timely and consensual responses to the demands for human rights guarantees, in particular, for economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights (ESCER) for the population affected by the project, including a strengthened complaints system in the local language.
5. Bring the Hidroituango and MRVA case to the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.
6. Ensure the protection of communities and avoid impunity in human rights violations by confirming that the EU, its member States, Switzerland, and Norway are committed to developing binding mechanisms on business and human rights, considering that the voluntary instruments are insufficient, and follow European examples, such as the forest policy and the Duty of Care Law in France.
7. That the EU, its member States, Switzerland, and Norway take an active role in the negotiations on the United Nations binding treaty on business and human rights, guaranteeing the participation of civil society organizations and human rights defenders in the process to construct this treaty, and contributing in a constructive manner to the treaty's text based on the "Zero Draft."
8. That the EU, its member States, Switzerland, and Norway make the commitment to press for the Colombian State

to effectively apply its environmental legislation, as established in the chapter on Trade and Sustainable Development in the Trade Agreement between the EU and Colombia, by virtue of maintaining the environmental protection levels.

9. Incorporate the serious situation faced by defenders/environmentalists and the serious human rights, environmental, and social violations of mega-projects in the human rights dialogues between the EU and Colombia.

### **Impact of the armed conflict**

Call on the Colombian State and government to:

10. Reach an agreement on and implement protection measures for the population affected by the Hidroituango project, in particular those who are part of MRVA, as is required in the Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights.
11. Respect the rights to truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition for victims of the armed conflict in the Hidroituango area of influence, especially in relation to the communities that claim that there are graves and bodies buried on the river's banks.
12. Take the necessary measures to dismantle the armed groups with a presence in the region, a presence that increases the communities' risk.

### **Reestablish sources of livelihood**

Urge the competent Colombian authorities to:

13. Guarantee the necessary comprehensive reparation for all people affected by the project, and that this is agreed upon in a participatory manner with the affected communities, especially those who are part of MRVA.
14. Immediately promote alternative sources of livelihood for the communities affected by Hidroituango and the emergency; for example, the creation of productive projects or the provision of homes, as decided upon with the population.
15. Coordinate the institutional response regarding the events that took place due to the May 2018 emergency so that they are effective, timely, have differentiated approaches, and guarantees of sustainability so that the victims of the emergency can return to their homes, including the necessary infrastructure projects.
16. Protect environmental rights to avoid increased environmental degradation in the Canyon of the Cauca River.

### **Protection of MRVA members and their families**

17. Follow-up on the cases of communities that are part of MRVA due to their high risks and particular vulnerability

and make public statements and/or dialogue with the Colombian authorities about their high-risk situations, including attacks, threats, or a stigmatization of their work as defenders.

### Espacio de Cooperación para la Paz<sup>58</sup>

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- 18.** For the European Union and its members States, in accordance with the Directives on human rights defenders, document and make visible the work in defense of human rights carried out by members of MRVA and establish strategies with MRVA to promote and guarantee their protection.
- 19.** Urge Colombian authorities, in particular the Ministry of the Interior, to immediately implement the MRVA's Prevention and Protection Plan and thereby guarantee the life and safety of the communities, movement members, and their families.
- 20.** Call on the Colombian State to fulfill its obligation to guarantee the right to the defense of human rights, with special attention to exercising the right to social protest, freedom of association and expression.
- 21.** Urge the National Attorney General's Office to advance, in a fast and transparent manner, the investigations on attacks, assassinations, and threats against MRVA members and their families, and to prosecute the direct perpetrators and masterminds of these crimes.

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<sup>58</sup> Currently comprised by ABColombia, Broederlijk Delen, Caritas Switzerland, Christian Aid, Norwegian Solidarity Committee for Latin America, Comundo, Latin American Council of Churches, Fastenopfer, Luthern World Federation, Fokus, Urgent Action Fund - Latin America, Forum Syd, Swedish Foundation for Human Rights, Working Grupo Switzerland-Colombia -ASKI-, Heks-Eper, ICCO, Swedish Church, International Action for Peace (Observers), kolko - Menschenrechte für Kolumbien e.V, Latin American Working Group, Geneva Call, Mundubat, Movimiento por la Paz -MPDL- in Colombia, ODHACO, Oxfam, Paz con Dignidad, Peace Brigades International -PBI- (Observers), SweFOR (Observers), Swissaid, Terre des Hommes Suisse

